

Many scholars have agreed over the years about the fact that music exists in *Ulysses*. This assumption has acquired more credibility since Joyce himself described the “Sirens” episode as a *fuga per canonem* in a letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver.ⁱ However, a question remains to be solved about the music in *Ulysses*; if there was indeed a musical pattern conceived within the novel, which even Joyce himself admitted, then how can we identify it and classify it? There are not many works dealing with analogies between *Ulysses* and musical compositions, because most of the scholars who have taken a musical approach to Joyce’s work focused their studies on the music found in “Sirens” exclusively, or on other aspects, such as musical allusions, or on questioning the accuracy of the author’s classification of “Sirens” as a *fuga per canonem*. Zack Bowen does carry out a comparison between ‘Sirens’ and Wagner’s *Die Meistersinger* in his essay “Libretto for the Hibernian Meistersinger: *Ulysses* as Opera.”ⁱⁱⁱ We must also point out that Bowen’s intention is not exactly to present analogies between Wagner’s opera and *Ulysses* in terms of structure, but rather in content, as he explains: “I think the opera might have been Joyce’s inspiration for his taking the musical stage in *Ulysses* for the Sirens song of twentieth-century literature; and the Song/Ballad of *Finnegans Wake*, which extended his work beyond, throughout all Christian Minstrelsy” (57). Bowen’s reasoning is based on his analysis of a number of similarities between Wagner’s opera and Joyce’s work regarding both authors and their respective protagonists. However, in spite of agreeing with Bowen’s point of view over Joyce’s musical inspiration, if we consider the structure of *Ulysses* we cannot share

Bowen's opinion when he classifies it as an opera, since we believe that there are more resemblances between Joyce's work and a symphony.

First of all, we must analyse carefully Joyce's words when he described the "Sirens" episode as a *fuga per canonem*. According to the *Collins Encyclopaedia of Music*,ⁱⁱⁱ this concept refers to "a contrapuntal composition in two or more parts or 'voices,' built on a subject [...]" and "it may occur [...] as a movement in a suite, sonata, or symphony, or as part of an oratorio, cantata or opera" (221-222). That means that if Joyce inserted within his masterpiece a chapter in the form of a *fuga per canonem*, which is "Sirens," then *Ulysses* may have been conceived as one of the above cited musical compositions. Considering the definitions found in the *Collins Encyclopaedia of Music* we can state the differences among these classical genres in the following features: an oratorio implies "a setting of a text on a sacred or epic theme for chorus, soloists, and orchestra, for performance in a church or concert hall" (395). *Ulysses* does not narrate a sacred story, so it seems unlikely that Joyce conceived it as an oratorio. A suite refers to "a composition consisting of a group of movements which are dance-types" [...] or "instrumental movements, frequently drawn from the incidental music to a play or from the ballet" (528). Joyce does not provide any suggestion of dance or ballet as main subject in the story, so we believe it cannot be considered as a suite either. A cantata is "properly a piece which is sung, as opposed to 'sonata' [...] for one or two voices with accompaniment" (103), whereas the sonata means literally a piece played, and is mainly applied to works for a solo instrument, as well as for a group of instruments, and more specifically, small instrumental work, such as chamber music^{iv} (510-511). In light of the size of the novel, we cannot compare it with the reduced scale of the cantata and the sonata. We thus can only speak about an opera or a symphony structure. An opera is "a dramatic work in which the whole or greater part of the text is sung by the actors with instru-

mental accompaniment” (391). However, we must also point out that an opera is mainly divided in a series of arias which are songs “for one or more voices” (39). A symphony refers to “a sonata for orchestra [...] but occasionally [...] for music for instruments and voices” (533). We must also add the presence of a final rondo at the end of a symphony, which is “a recurring section” inserted “as the last movement of a sonata, symphony or concerto” (465). Another relevant element is that the structure of a symphony resembles the division found in a sonata-form with three or four movements where a return to the starting point can be found.

In light of these elements, we observe clear analogies between the structure of *Ulysses* and that of a symphony in the division in three main parts with a return to the beginning, understanding Molly’s final monologue in “Penelope” as a rondo, which is a solo with a recurring section that occurs mainly as a last movement intending a return to the initial motif. In fact, considering the description provided by the *Collins Encyclopaedia of Music* of the twelve Salomon symphonies (nos. 93-104), we can establish a parallelism between the rondos found in Haydn’s symphonies after 1780 and Molly Bloom’s improvised interior monologue in “Penelope,” since Haydn’s varying recapitulations and course are unpredictable but keep his characteristic humour and spontaneity (533). We could then suggest that this similarity can be seen as a possible source of musical inspiration for Joyce during the writing process of “Penelope.” There exists a return to the initial motif in terms of literary structure, and also from a musical point of view, in the tonality of the novel. According to Clive Hart’s analysis in “The Rhythm of *Ulysses*,”^v the literary structure found in *Ulysses* can be regarded as an “out-and-return journey [...] expressly indicated by Joyce’s shorthand descriptions of the aims and techniques of the chapters in the inversely correspondent opening and closing parts” (165). In fact, Hart is not the only scholar to assign such a structure, as we can observe from Don Gifford’s division of his *Notes for Joyce: An*

Annotation of James Joyce's 'Ulysses' (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1974) in three sections: "The Telemachiad," "The Wandering of Ulysses," and "The Homecoming." These sections bear resemblances with the movements of a symphony, and at the same time we can observe the "out-and-return" sequence mentioned by Hart. In *Ulysses*, Joyce narrates how some characters head for Dublin ("The Telemachiad") where they meet up ("The Wandering of Ulysses"), and then they return to their initial situation ("The Homecoming"). In terms of structural arrangement, these three different main parts in which the structure of *Ulysses* is divided resemble the three movements of a symphony with a departure, a development, and a return. Finally, "Sirens" could be understood as a secondary or fourth short movement in the form of a *fuga per canonem*.

This "out-and-return" sequence can also be perceived in other aspects of the novel, such as in tonality, which is the first thing a musical composer or an interpreter takes into account when approaching a piece of music. Some scholars have claimed to decipher the music embedded in 'Sirens,' for instance Margaret Rogers, who connects letters and words with musical notes in some of her articles,^{vi} as in "The Soggetto Cavato in 'Sirens,'" where she suggests "that Joyce gave musical notes within the letters of the words that make up the text" (588). But Rogers is not the only scholar who is interested in linking words with musical notes. Jack W. Weaver analyses the music found in each episode of *Ulysses* and presents his results in his search for its tonality.^{vii} However, there are a number of questions arising after reading some of Weaver's statements carefully. The first matter is whether there is a reason for providing *Ulysses*, or any of the episodes, with a musical key. In other words, did Joyce really pursue such an aim? Was there an implicit purpose for doing that? And, why should that be relevant at all? These questions remain unanswered after reading several studies on music in *Ulysses* like the ones published by Weaver and Rogers.

Nevertheless, we could think about a reason and a purpose for providing this work of literature with a musical key which is relevant within an analysis carried out from a musical point of view. We can use the key of a musical composition as a means to determine its structure. Therefore, if the tonality found in *Ulysses* follows an established pattern, then we can conclude that this literary work may have been written considering a specific genre. The definition of key is essential for this analysis, and the one provided by the *Collins Encyclopaedia of Music* is the following:

A term used to indicate the precise tonality of music which uses as its basic material one of the major or minor scales and accepts certain relationships between the notes of the scale and the chords built on them. (298)
[...] The principal key of the piece is thought of as the home base to which the music must return at the end (300).

If we take into account this concept, then we cannot agree with some of Weaver's statements. For instance, in his analysis of "Telemachus" he states that the tonic and dominant of *Ulysses* can be found in the opening phrase, "Stately plump Buck Mulligan," as "S" is the first note in this scale, which corresponds to E minor in German notation (53). He reaches this conclusion by making use of Clive Hart's *Concordance to 'Finnegans Wake.'* However, if we take a close look at Hart's list of correspondences,^{viii} we observe that Weaver means E flat instead of E minor. The difference is in fact relevant, because E flat is a note, but E minor refers to a tonality (with a modality: minor) that does not correspond to E flat, but to E natural instead, which implies a difference of a semitone. Therefore, Weaver's conclusions seem to be questionable. Another issue to analyse is the method used by Weaver to identify the key, because we cannot agree that the tonic of a musical composition is given by the first note. In order to identify the key of a musical composition, we must consider another concept: the cadence. Then we will realise that we need to adopt a different approach. *The Collins Encyclopaedia of Music* refers to cadence^{ix} as:

Literally ‘a falling’ (Lat., *cado*, ‘I fall’). The name seems to originate from the fact that in un-harmonised melody (e.g. plainsong or folksong) it is common for a tune to end by falling to the tonic or keynote (cf. *Twelfth Night*, I, 1: “That strain again! It had a dying fall”). Hence it is applied to a concluding phrase, whether at the end of a section or at the end of a complete melody, and, by a natural transference, to the harmonisation of such phrases (96).

According to this definition, in order to identify the tonic of a musical composition we should have to consider, not the beginning but the end of the piece of music. Therefore, instead of analysing the beginning of *Ulysses*, we should pay more attention to the end. In fact, if we analyse the resolution of the episodes in *Ulysses* we can perceive that a coincidence with the symphonic structure exists, provided that this musical composition consists of three main movements with a fourth additional *fuga per canonem* in “Sirens,” and that the initial key reappears in the last movement.

We have already seen that *Ulysses* can be divided into three main parts, but we can also identify a repeated key in both the initial and the final episodes, “Telemachus” and “Penelope.” According to the above mentioned definition of cadence, the method we must use in order to identify the key of these episodes is the analysis of their respective final sounds. The final sound in ‘Penelope’ is Molly’s final “Yes.” It is also significant that in this episode the beginning and the end coincide, because in both cases we find a “Yes” with an initial capital letter. If we take into consideration the final lines of *Ulysses* where Joyce states the cities and the years in which he wrote his masterpiece, we can observe that he includes Trieste, Zürich, and Paris, three cities where “yes” can be translated into music. The official language of these European capitals is Italian for Trieste, French for Paris, and for Zürich we find a peculiar case, German, Italian and French. It is significant that Italian and French translate “yes” into “sì,” just like in Spanish, a language that may have been familiar to Molly Bloom, who was from Gibraltar

and who is also the character performing this interior monologue in “Penelope,” with other references to Spain, like Tarifa (*U*, 18.1357), Spanish girls (*U*, 18.1586), Ronda (*U*, 18.1594), Algeciras (*U*, 18.1597), Gibraltar (*U*, 18.1601), and Andalusian girls (*U*, 18.1603). In fact, “si” can be interpreted in all these languages as a musical note as well, which corresponds to “ti” or “B” in German notation. We also have repeated evidence of Joyce as a polyglot throughout his works, and therefore we can presume that this positive call may have an implicit musical meaning, such as the tonality in “Penelope.” The fact that the final “Yes”^x appears with an initial capital letter like at the beginning of the chapter can be understood as Joyce’s intention to establish B major as the tonality of Molly’s virtuous solo or final rondo.

The last sound of “Telemachus” can be found in one of its final sentences, “a voice sweettoned and sustained called to him from the sea” (*U*, 1.741). If we try to identify the tonality by means of applying the concept of cadence to that last musical sentence of “Telemachus” we find the word “sea,” apparently a word like any other. However, we realise that its pronunciation, [si:], is equivalent to the same note that can be found as tonic for the last episode, “Penelope,” in Italian, French, and also in Spanish. And the “sea” is also present in the final sections of both “Telemachus” and “Penelope.” In the final fragment of the last episode we find Molly crying “O and the sea the sea” (*U*, 18.1598). Gifford^{xi} establishes a connection (634) between this reference in “Penelope” and the “Thalatta! Thalatta!” (*U*, 1.80) found in a statement uttered by Buck Mulligan in “Telemachus,” which Gifford translates from Attic Greek as “The sea! The sea!” (15). Buck Mulligan’s following statement describing the sea as “she is our great sweet mother” (*U*, 1.80) reinforces the suggestion of the sea as fundamental or an origin to which the music returns. In my opinion, all these associations between the initial and the final episodes are relevant in order to perceive this return to the “sea,” which can be interpreted as a

subtle musical homecoming to the departing point of *Ulysses*. And in fact, the final section of “Penelope” shows Molly Bloom performing a regression when she evokes her youth in these southern coastal towns like Gibraltar and Algeciras, a recollection that causes her nostalgic cry over the sea.

I cannot conclude that Joyce intended to provide *Ulysses* with a musical structure. And I cannot demonstrate either that he intended to emulate a symphony, discarding completely the possibility of an opera or any other musical composition. However, I believe that more analogies exist between a symphony and the structure found in *Ulysses* due to the returning tonality and the division into parts, or, in musical terms, the three movements. The final section, in the form of a rondo and performed by Molly Bloom, reinforces the analogy with a symphony because of the return to the beginning of the work. In addition, the correspondence between the initial and the final key connects the first and third sections, in an equivalent way to the development of action in a symphony. Furthermore, such a movement resembles Hart’s perception of the “out-and-return” structure in *Ulysses*. Finally, the cadence in “si” may be considered as a sound with multiple interpretations, like Molly’s nostalgic cry for her youth and the sea in her final regression, or like the musical note in French, Italian, and Spanish that can be translated as “indeed,” this being perhaps a last approving wink from the author to all those who are certain about the music in *Ulysses*.

Notes

ⁱ Joyce writes this statement while in Zürich in a letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver on the 6th August 1919 (242, in Ellmann, Richard. *Selected Letters of James Joyce*. London: Faber, 1975).

ⁱⁱ In *Papers on Joyce*, no. 10/11, 57-70. Murcia: Spanish James Joyce Society, 2004-2005.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Collins Encyclopedia of Music*, ed. Westrup, Sir Jack and F. Ll. Harrison. London: Chancellor Press, 1991.

^{iv} According to the *Collins Encyclopaedia of Music*, chamber music is “properly music suited for a room (It., *camera*) in a house, as opposed to music for a church or a theatre [... and is] applied to instrumental works written for a limited number of performers, in which there is only one player to each part” (113).

^v In *James Joyce: The Artist and the Labyrinth: A Critical Re-evaluation*, ed. Augustine Martin, 153-167. London: Ryan Publishing Co. Ltd., 1990.

^{vi} In “The Soggetto Cavato in ‘Sirens’” (in *Images of Joyce*, vol. 2. ed. Hart, Clive, C. George Sandulescu, Bonnie K. Scott, and Fritz Senn. 587-592. Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1998), and in “Mining the Ore of ‘Sirens’: An Investigation of Structural Components” (in *Bronze by Gold: The Music of Joyce*, ed. Sebastian D. G. Knowles, 263-276. New York: Garland Publishing, 1999).

^{vii} Jack W. Weaver, *Joyce’s Music and Noise: Theme and Variation in His Writings*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998.

^{viii} Attached as “Appendix A” in Weaver, Jack W. *Joyce’s Music and Noise: Theme and Variation in His Writings*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998 (125).

^{ix} Although we provide here a clear and simple definition of this concept, we should add that a more extended explanation can be found in Walter Piston’s *Harmony*. In music, there is not just one kind of cadence, but rather four different types. The concept from Webster’s Dictionary refers to the perfect cadence, which implies a movement from the dominant, represented in Roman numeral “V,” to the tonic, “I.” But there are more types of cadences. According to Walter Piston’s *Harmony* (W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. New York: 1941) the other three types are plagal, from subdominant, “IV,” to tonic; imperfect, from “I” to “V” (but also from “II” to “V,” or from “IV” to “V,” or even from “VI” to “V”); and finally, the deceptive cadence, from “V” to “VI” (172-188).

^x We must also keep in mind that this “yes” appears repeatedly in Molly’s soliloquy some ninety times, indicating presumably a constant return to the fundamental.

^{xi} In Gifford, Don and Robert J. Seidman. *Notes for Joyce: An Annotation of James Joyce’s ‘Ulysses.’* New York: E. P. Dutton, 1974.